Alaska Teacher and Principal Incentive Project

The Alaska Teacher and Principal Incentive Project combines components of merit-, knowledge-, and performance-based compensation systems where performance rewards are based on a growth model for monitoring student achievement. The project will focus on teachers and principals who increase student achievement in math; build capacity for math instruction and principal leadership; and increase the overall number of highly-qualified math teachers in rural Alaska.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

The three rural school districts partnering for this program serve 1,064 students in 27 schools (26/27 schools are high need). The districts' percentages of students classified as low-SES range from 48 to 82 percent. Most students (grades 3 to 10) are below proficiency in math compared with students statewide, ranging from 16.2 to 95 percent proficient. Teacher turnover among the three districts ranges from 9 to 36 percent with a mean tenure of 3 to 5 years. In these districts, just 5 to 23 percent of math teachers are highly qualified.

Background

The Alaska Teacher and Principal Incentive Project builds on an existing 2006 State Department of Education performance-pay initiative funded by the Alaska legislature. The program will add the specific focus on math—a hard-to-staff area for the state—and will bring attention to the subject that has below-average student performance and a shortage of highly qualified teachers. Two of the three districts (Kuspuk and Chugach) have existing performance-pay language in their negotiated teacher contract agreements. Also, Chugach School District has already successfully piloted parts of the Alaska Teacher and Principal Incentive Project plan via the Quality Schools Model (QSM).

Incentives

Incentives based on growth in student achievement at the school and classroom level are the primary components of the plan, followed by incentives for teachers and principals related to their performance evaluation, professional development, and for assumption of additional responsibility. Incentives based on student achievement include schoolwide growth rewards ($2,500-$5,500); annual incentives for math teachers ($750-$2250); and rewards for developing math individual learning plans ($750-$2250). Teacher performance incentives range from $250-$1000 and include teacher performance and evaluation, as well as Professional Growth (Plan-Implement-Evaluate-Refine – PIER) Plans for teacher leadership and math instruction. Additional responsibility incentives range from $1,500-$3,000 and include compensation for work beyond the contract day such as math tutoring, principal contract work, and mentoring during and after regular school hours. Other incentives include bonuses ($2,000-$4,000) for teachers who are highly qualified in math.

LOCATION(S)   Lake and Peninsula School District, Kuspuk School District, Chugach School District, Alaska

AWARD DATE   November 2006

DURATION   5 years

PARTNERS   Lake and Peninsula School District, Kuspuk School District, Chugach School District, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED), Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), Non-Profit partner

Center for **Educator Compensation Reform**

Evaluation

The project evaluation design includes qualitative and quantitative data and the use of descriptive statistics. The project evaluator will measure all performance goals in systematic, valid, and realizable ways. Evaluation will include feedback on results of past assessments to help teachers refine curriculum and instruction. A growth model will be used to assess student achievement.

Resources

The Alaska Department of EED will contribute matching funds to be used by partners for the schoolwide achievement incentive. Federal, state, and local funds will support the project. Stable and ongoing funding exists in all three areas for the purpose of this project; all three districts will work with their school boards and communities to create local budgets for district contributions and to form a savings fund for any unused performance pay funds to carry forward.

Data Systems

The Alaska Department of EED will perform and maintain the statistical calculations to determine annual student growth used as the basis for performance compensation. Aligned Information Management System (AIMS) is web based and contains student data and monitoring and staff performance evaluations. Additional features will be added to support new student growth data year to year.

Year 2 Activities

- Formalized data management and communication plans were developed and operationalized, and the AIMS data management system version 3.0 now includes components for user input of TIF data.

- Project-wide, the staff retention rate at the end of Year 2 was 85 percent, which is a significant achievement in rural Alaska.
- The percentage of eligible certificated teachers and principals in Chugach, Kuspuk, and Lake and Peninsula School Districts who actively participated in TIF increased from 66 percent in Year 1 to 72 percent in Year 2 of the project.
- The number of teachers and administrators highly qualified in math grew from 31 in Year 1 to 50 by the end of Year 2: 38 percent of eligible participants are now highly qualified in math.
- Results of a satisfaction survey showed a statistically significant increase from Year 1 to Year 2 in participant satisfaction with the TIF project and also in the perceived level of communication about the project.

Outlook for Year 3

- The Alaska Staff Development Network offered highly successful math courses to TIF participants in Year 2 and will offer two new courses to TIF participants in Year 3.
- The procedures for the Tutoring and Individual Learning Plan components will be the focus of professional development to ensure equitable and consistent application of those processes across all of the project sites.
- The balance among incentive components was reviewed by the management team at the start of Year 3, with some adjustments made to make compensation for tutoring more realistic.